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# The Religious Spirit of the American Indian

As Shown in the Development of His Religious Rites and Customs

By  
Hartley B. Alexander


Chicago  
The Open Court Publishing Company  
London Agents  
Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd.







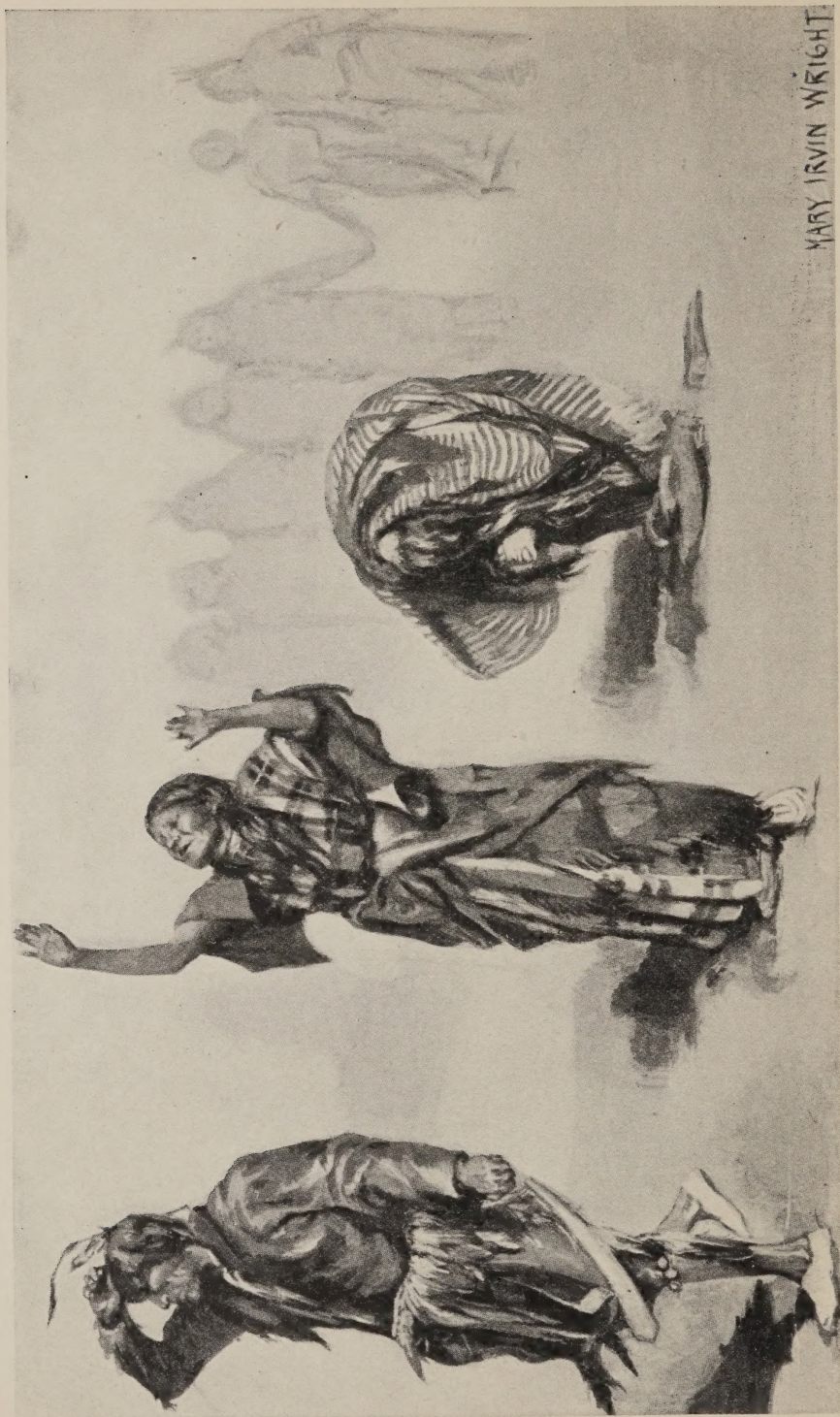




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THE GHOST DANCE: ECSTASY. (After Mooney.)

# The Religious Spirit of the American Indian

As Shown in the Development of His Religious Rites and Customs

By  
Hartley B. Alexander

Illustrated

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January and February, 1910  
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Chicago  
The Open Court Publishing Company  
London Agents  
Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd.

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## THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN.<sup>1</sup>

1. When unaffected by European ideas, the great majority of the American Indians of both continents are unquestionably animists. Indeed, all of them must be so classed if we take the word 'animist' in the broad sense given to it by Mr. Tylor; and even after we have made—as we must make—some discrimination of the very different grades of speculative power which the term implies, it is still to be borne in mind that only in a broad way do these grades distinguish different races and peoples. While, of course, the lowest tribes are fairly uniform in their ways of thought, yet the most advanced peoples, as those of Mexico and Peru, are by no means wholly freed from primitive ideas; along with philosophic theologies they retain instinctive superstitions, and their mental attitudes (like our own) must be conceived rather as a congregation of vaguer and distincter insights than as systematic unfoldments of their clearest point of view. The human mind may be likened to a forest tree: at the summit, in the clear light of day, is the greenest and most vigorous foliage, the proper source of the tree's strength; but far down the shade are still verdant the boughs of an earlier growth; and the lower trunk is still cumbered with dying branches and marked by ancient scars.

2. Primitive or *instinctive animism* (the "zoönism" of Mr. Stuart-Glennie, the "hecastotheism" of Major Powell) is that stage where nature is simply regarded as living, in all her manifestations, without reflection, without personification; the inanimate has never suggested itself as a possibility, and the feeling of nature's animation has never risen to the idea of personality.

Typical of such a mental state are the almost unorganized hordes of wandering savages of the South American forests. Doubt-

<sup>1</sup>This paper is an expansion of the article "Communion with Deity—American," written for Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. For most of the illustrations author and publishers are indebted to the Bureau of American Ethnology at Washington.

less the rivers, trees, and beasts which form their environing world seem to them endowed with the same sort of irresponsible instincts and desires as their own, but it is misleading to speak of such a consciousness as a recognition of spiritual life or as in any distinctive sense religious. Garcilasso de la Vega, describing the Indians of pre-Inca times, says<sup>2</sup> that among these tribes were Indians "little better than tamed beasts and others who were worse than the most savage animals." They adored, he says, herbs and flowers and trees, beasts, birds, reptiles, fishes, huge stones and little pebbles, high mountains, caverns, deep precipices, the earth and its rivers, fire, natural prodigies. But there were some, such as the Chirihuanas on the borders of Peru, who worshiped nothing at all, unmoved to the adoration of a higher power even by fear. It is indeed difficult to discover much evidence of religious sensibility in some of the inferior peoples, though the difficulty is probably due rather to lack of conceptual power than want of motive. Thus, the Fuegian Yahgan are said to have no real notion of spirits; in the darkness they sometimes imagine themselves assailed by the Walapatu, but it is only the more lively-minded who know these as disembodied ghosts, for the rest the Walapatu are merely warriors of the neighboring tribe.

But any recognition of external powers is a beginning in the ideal definition of environment and the classification of nature. It is already an important conceptual step, following which the further step of endeavoring to appease or win over such of these powers as may be thought potent for ill or good is not long in taking. Rude forms of sacrifice develop—the exposure of food offerings (perhaps suggested by the provisioning of the dead, for this custom prevails even among the wandering Amazonians), the slaughter of prisoners (where the more primitive self-glory of killing may be the basis), and even the offering up of one's own kin and offspring in times of stress.

Human instincts are complex. It is practically impossible to tell whether the elementary feeling in sacrifice is desire to win aid by pleasuring the higher power, or desire to propitiate by depriving one's self. The two desires are at the root of very distinct religious developments—worship and penance, communion and atonement,—but at their source they cannot be clearly disentangled. If fear be the primal religious emotion, placation of the feared power is doubt-

<sup>2</sup>*History of the Incas*, I, ix. Garcilasso was himself half Indian, and writing as he did within a generation of the Spanish conquest, his work is our most valuable single document on the Inca civilization.



less the fundamental rite; yet even placation may be interpreted as a form of pleasuring. Cruel himself, primitive man deems other powers to take delight in suffering, and so, in the presence of danger, inflicts loss or pain upon himself to satisfy the malevolent might which he feels to be working against him, on the principle that homœopathic application sates or deceives the enemy, and so brings immunity. The Arawaks, before shooting the rapids of a river, inflict severe punishment upon themselves by putting red pepper into their eyes to satisfy the evil waters, and it is quite possible that the Fuegians, said to have thrown their children into stormy seas to lighten their boats, did so rather as an act of propitiation of the watery demon. Before setting out on the warpath, many North American tribes were accustomed to make offerings of parts of their bodies, as bits of flesh, toes, fingers, or to subject themselves to severe tortures. The sacrifice of children by their parents or of a tribesman by the tribe in case of a calamity, such as an epidemic, occurred in both Americas. Voluntary human sacrifice is also recorded; enthusiasts among the Guanches are said to have offered their lives to the mountain they worshiped, and Garcilasso states that Indians of certain tribes worshiping the tiger (jaguar), the lion (puma), or the bear, meeting these animals, threw themselves upon the earth to be unresistingly devoured by their gods. The latter of these practices (perhaps not altogether credible) seems to point to totemic cults rather than to animistic sacrifice, primitive and unadorned; yet it should not be confused with human sacrifice or voluntary suicide at the graves of the dead, both of wide-spread occurrence, for the motive underlying these customs is one of service ("tendance," as it has been called) rather than propitiation of malevolent powers and aversion of ill.

3. Communion with a superhuman, or an extrahuman, world is, broadly speaking, a pragmatic definition of that world. The rites and practices by means of which man seeks to influence or to come into relation with powers other than human are the surest interpreters of his conceptions of those powers. A food offering implies a deity endowed with appetite, and if the food offering must be made before the human worshipers may partake of food, there is the further implication that the deity is thoughtful of his precedence—is, in fact, a jealous god. The fear that seeks to satisfy with blood the ill-wreaking powers of nature ascribes to those powers a ferocious delight in cruelty, and eventually personifies them under the hideous forms of bugbears and ogres, as the man-devouring monsters of the Central American pantheons.

For not only are rites and practices interpreters, they are also in large part the framers of the conceptions by which they are eventually justified to reason. Ideas as well as myths are ætiological; conception follows action, and in religion the rite is prior to the theology. Sacrifice is characteristic even in the early aniconic stage of animism; gifts are offered to rivers and trees and hills—whatever powers and patrons the animist would placate or win—in the instinctive belief that these objects are endowed with human appetites and likings. But as thought gains in clearness, conceptual deities evolve from nature; objects which have all along been treated



ZUNI SUN SHRINE.

Illustrating personified conception of nature power. (From 23d RBEW. M. C. Stevenson.)

as human in feeling are inevitably conceived and represented as human in form; anthropomorphic theology follows from animistic instinct. Thus, the Mexican *Tlaloc*, the rain-giving mountains, take form as man-headed pyramids, colored the blue of the sky above, the green of verdure below, and eventually concentrate into the god Tlaloc. Cuecaltzin, the fire, the flame, "the ancient god," worshiped in the simple hearthfire, becomes anthropomorphized as Ixco-cauhqui,<sup>3</sup> "Yellow Face," and is given a manlike image. Even the sun—of all nature divinities most fixed and impressive in its natural

<sup>3</sup> For the spelling of Mexican names I follow the usage in Jourdanet and Siméon's scholarly edition of Bernardino de Sahagun, *Histoire générale des choses de la Nouvelle Espagne*, Paris, 1880.

form—becomes man-faced in Peruvian temple-images, thus outwardly symbolizing the mental iconography inevitable to animistic thought when it comes to conceptual realization.



TABLET OF THE SUN, PALENQUE.

4. The second stage in this conceptual development, treading close on the heels of primitive animism, is what may be termed



*"fetishistic animism."* Fetishism is merely highly localized animism. Experience early teaches men that certain natural objects or powers are more potent than others, and again there are natural objects impressive by reason of unusual appearance or given special sig-



ZUNI CAVE SHRINE, WITH PRAYER PLUME OFFERINGS.  
(From 23d RBEW. M. C. Stevenson.)

nificance from some chance happening. Should such objects be fixed or beyond control, as a tree, a waterfall, a mountain, the sun, the winds, they are on the way to become nature deities; but should they be portable, or at least appropriable, by the individual, they take rank as fetishes as soon as his special regard is devoted to



them. But that there is no hard and fast line between deified nature powers and fetishes is shown by the intermediate examples: thus, one Ojibwa is said to have worshiped a certain boulder which he saw move of itself, while another had for his special tutelary a birch



ZUNI CAVE SHRINE WITH IMAGES REMOVED FOR PHOTOGRAPHING.  
(From 23d RBEW. M. C. Stevenson.)

tree in which he had heard an unusual sound. Schoolcraft states that the Indians propitiated "wood-dryads" at certain *consecrated spots*, with offerings of tobacco, vermillion, red cloth, or any other treasure, and he also states that the Indians adore curiously wrought boulders having the essential character of idols: these are "sometimes

distinguished by the use of pigments," but are "generally oddly-shaped water-worn masses, upon which no chisel or labor of any kind has been employed."

The fetish, then, may be merely a natural object of striking appearance or associations, or it may be such an object more or less modified by human art. In any case, its use denotes a distinct advance in the systematization of ideas. It represents a concentration of religious experience, and so becomes a concrete symbol. It is regarded as a powerful being, not merely for the life which is in itself, but for the vicarious function by which its possessor is able to control other powers; indeed, its only virtue is this outer control,



FETISH NECKLACE OF HUMAN FINGERS; CHEYENNE.  
(After Bourke.)

and the savage who has lost faith in its power to bring him good disregards it at once.<sup>4</sup> Thus the fetish already stands for experience outside itself and has in it the germ of the true symbol. It is a key to the powers of nature, by the mere holding of which the possessor believes that he is enabled to influence their action.

In strict sense the "fetish" is distinguished from the "idol" as the fact from the symbol, the living body of the god from his mere portrait. But the distinction is by no means absolute; we have seen that the fetish is already an inchoate symbol, and, on the other hand, the image of a god seldom or never entirely loses the odor of sanc-

<sup>4</sup> A pathetic illustration is the case of one of the women wounded at Wounded Knee. She wore a "ghost shirt," and when told that it must be removed, said: "Yes, take it off. They told me a bullet would not go through. Now I don't want it any more."

tity. The development of fetishism toward symbolism follows yet other paths. In the first place, it runs into the purely symbolic art of magic. On the magic principle that like influences like, a fetish representing some animal is deemed to give the possessor a special control over, or success in the capture of that animal, or to give him its qualities. Characteristic contents of the Indians' "medicine bags" are skins or parts of animals or their dried bodies, and from these to painted or beaded representations is but a step. As a rule the contents of the "medicine bag," though they may be bartered, are a constant possession; the painting, of course, is a matter of repetition and is varied to suit the occasion, so that in a lacrosse game described by Dr. Eastman the runners painted themselves with representations of birds, of fleet animals, of the lightning—various emblems of swiftness. It should be noted, too, that, in general, as the symbolic character of the fetish gains, its special sanctity and value diminish; in the direction of magic it develops into the mere talisman.

Fetishes in general among the Indians are alienable and are often material of barter, but there is a special type of charm which is as fixed for the individual as the totem is for the clan. This is the personal tutelary sought during a period of fasting at the age of puberty—a custom common to many North American tribes. The tutelary might be a stone bearing a rude likeness to some bird or animal, in which case all creatures of that kind were regarded as having the finder under their protection, or it might be some natural object thought to have made a special sign, as with the two Ojibwas cited above, but most commonly it was some object seen in a dream or vision. In such case it was represented by an image or painting, and so came to acquire the representative character of the true symbol.

The development into symbolism takes also a mythological form. As the agent of a natural power, the fetish comes to be looked upon as the image of the essential nature of this power, which thus acquires a mythologic personality from the very concreteness of its representative. It is very difficult for man (primitive or civilized) to hold clear the distinction of symbol and symbolized, and it is only obvious that the development of symbolic expression should have peopled the world with all manner of quaint personalities. When by patent associations the Hopi represents the sky by an eagle and the earth by a spider, it is a natural confusion which presently names the sky "Eagle" and the earth "Spider" and identifies them as mythologic beings of eagle and spider character.



5. It is plain that the stage of instinctive animism is passed. The individual object is no longer animate in its own character, but as the sign or abode of a more far-reaching power. Nature is no longer regarded as a swarming of multitudinous living beings, but as the abiding place of indwelling potencies. Personification and mythology have begun to play their part.<sup>5</sup> There is a seen and an unseen world, and the latter is the world of wills. Nature is partitioned among personalities, and gods have begun to be.

This higher *mythologic animism* undoubtedly represents a great imaginative advance, reflecting the development of the abstractive faculty which mental symbolism implies. It is the foundation of polytheistic philosophy and the ideal basis of the complicated pantheons of Mexico and Peru.

But we should not forget that the attainment of clear personification is by no means uniform in the same race or the same experience. The older and vaguer animism, a trifle philosophized perhaps, remains still the normal attitude toward the comparatively unnoted or unspecialized mass of experience. This cannot be better illustrated than by the North American doctrine of a type of nature power variously known as *manitou* (Algonquian), *orenda* (Iroquoian), and *wakanda* (Siouan). The *manitou*, says Schoolcraft,<sup>6</sup> is "a spiritual or mysterious power. . . . Manitous, except those of the tutelary class, are believed to be generally invisible and immaterial, but can assume any form in the range of animate creation and even, when the occasion calls for it, take their place among inanimate forms." George Copway, one of the first Indians of the north to write about the Indian people, describes the conception of his own tribe, the Ojibwa:<sup>7</sup> "The skies were filled with the deities they worshiped, and the whole forest awakened with their whispers. The lakes and streams were the places of their resort, and mountains and valleys alike their abode." And while these nature spirits, headed by the Great Spirit, their general guardian, included many that might properly be ranked as deities, they dwindled to mere sprites having only a group or class character—powers rather than personalities—curiously conceived as minims in size. "During a shower of rain thousands of them are sheltered in a flower. The

<sup>5</sup> The Zuñi myth which accounts for the character of stone fetishes by a story of the transformation of living beings to this form illustrates the transition. The more primitive belief in the actual vitality of the fetish is seen to be inadequate to experience, but yet the power of the fetish must be explained; whence its life is referred to a past time.

<sup>6</sup> *Information Respecting the History, Conditions and Prospects of the Indians of the United States*, Philadelphia, 1853.

<sup>7</sup> *The Ojibway Nation*, London, 1850.



Ojibwa, as he reclines beneath the shade of his forest trees, imagines these gods to be about him. He detects their tiny voices in the insect's hum. With half-closed eyes he beholds them sporting by thousands on a sun-ray."

J. N. B. Hewitt, an Iroquois, has given us a more philosophical analysis of the belief.<sup>8</sup> "All things were thought to have life and to exercise will, whose behests were accomplished through orenda—that is, through magic power reputed to be inherent in all things. Thus all phenomena, all states, all changes, and all activity were interpreted as the results of the exercise of magic power directed by some controlling mind.... The wind was the breath of some person. The lightning was the winking of some person's eyes.... Beasts and animals, plants and trees, rocks, and streams of water, having human or other effective attributes or properties in a paramount measure, were naturally regarded as the controllers of those attributes or properties, which could be made available by orenda or magic power. And thus began the reign of the beast gods, plant gods, tree gods, and their kind. The signification of the Iroquoian word usually rendered into English by the term "god" is "disposer," or "controller." This definition supplies the reason that the reputed controllers of the operations of nature received worship and prayers. To the Iroquois god and controller are synonymous terms."

It will be seen that we have here a point of view that fluctuates between a material view of nature powers and a purely spiritual or psychical view; and in proportion as the conception lifts itself free from the material prepossessions of mere sensation, there is gain in mythical distinctness and personality. Probably the *katchinas* of the Hopis and other Pueblo Indians represent a clear advance in the direction of mythical and conceptual definiteness, while yet retaining evident traces of the more naive animism. J. W. Fewkes, the authority on this subject, describes them as follows:<sup>9</sup> "The term *katchina* was originally limited to the spirits, or personified medicine power of the ancients, personifications of a similar power in other objects have likewise come to be called *katchina*. Thus the magic power or medicine of the sun may be called *katchina*, or that of the earth may be known by the same general name. The term may also be applied to personations of these spirits or medicine potencies by men or their representation by pictures or graven objects." It is to be noted that each *katchina* has its recognized symbolic form, that

<sup>8</sup> "Iroquoian Cosmology" in *21st Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, Washington. Future references to the *Reports* in this article will be abbreviated "RBEW."

<sup>9</sup> "Hopi Katchinas," *21st RBEW*.



TUSAYAN DANCERS AS KATCINAS.  
(Fewkes.)

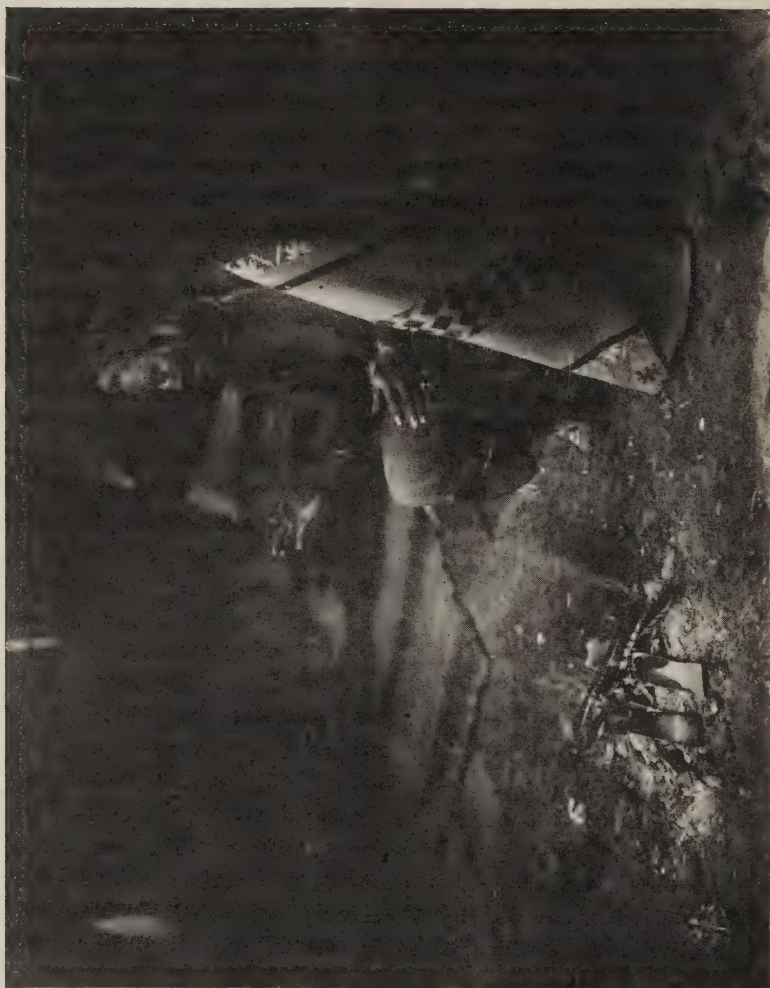


it is clear personification; while the manitou is always a god *in posse* and may be a god or godling *in actu*, the katchina is never less than the latter. The development of the Mexican rain-god Tlaloc from the rain-giving mountains, *tlaloque*, which has been noted above, is a further illustration of the advance from a vague and general animation of nature to concrete personification; and in the manifold applications of the Peruvian term *huaca*, broadly equivalent to the Greek *áyos*, we can clearly infer a pervasive, naive animism preceding the highly symbolic religion of the Incas.

6. It is not until symbolization has proceeded so far that the distinction of seen and unseen world is clearly realized, until there is felt to be a gap between the passive tangible and the active intangible nature of things, that we can accurately speak of "communion" with a lordlier world. To be sure, in the earlier stage there are all the germs of religious communion. There are cherishings, offerings, propitiations, pleas addressed to objects vaguely felt to be potent in man's destinies, the beginnings of sacrifice, penance and prayer; but as yet there is no science of intercourse with a higher reality, for as yet the severance of this from the world of every-day contacts is not felt. Life is still on a sensuous basis, and the ideal world which makes religion possible is in process of creation.

Most of the Indian peoples had already reached the higher stage when the white man came. However grotesquely blazoned by the imagination, they had nevertheless learned to conceive of a divine world interlocking with and dominating the human. But with few or none of them was the idealism thorough enough to make the distinction of worlds systematic; in whole areas of experience the primitive, instinctive animism prevailed. Hence it is that we find everywhere in Indian rite the dominance of magic. For magic is not a form of communion, in strict sense, but of compulsion, and it tends to maintain itself in connection with the less personal, the more naive, notions of nature powers; it is directed to the control not of deities, endowed with independent wills, but of those irresponsible nature forces which, if they are personified at all, are regarded as mere genii, slaves of the lamp or of the seal, and are counted in groups and kinds rather than as individuals. Magic is essentially a vast extension of the principle of identity: its universal formula is *similia similibus*, "like affects like." The Indian warrior who adorned his body with painted charms believed that he was thereby compelling to his aid the powers of nature so symbolized; the dance in which he fore-represented the fall of his enemy laid a kind of obligation upon his gods to fulfil its promise:

the song in which he called down maledictions, robbed his foe of strength by its very naming of weakness. The Huancas made tambours of the skins of slain foes, the beating of which was to put their enemies to flight; the Indians of Cuzco lighted fires on clear nights in the belief that the smoke might act as clouds to prevent



THE HEARTH ALTAR.  
(Photograph by Curtis.)

frost; the Sioux medicine-man made an image of the animal or other object which he regarded as the cause of disease and then burned it, thus symbolically curing his patient; and certain tribes of the Northwest are said to have made images of the children they wished to have, believing that the fondling of these images would



encourage the coming of real children. Perhaps the clearest illustration of the primitive inability to separate the destinies of like things is to be found in the mandate of a prophet to the Ojibwas: "The fire must never be suffered to go out in your lodge. Summer and winter, day and night, in the storm or when it is calm, you must remember that the life in your body and the fire in your lodge are the same and of the same date. If you suffer your fire to be extinguished, at that moment your life will be at its end."<sup>10</sup>

Thus the symbol seemed to give man control over potencies other than his own, and so released him from his primitive servitude to helpless fear; he had but to find out the secret signs of nature to command her inmost forces. But all this is magic; it is not worship. Communion with gods—prayer and its response, sacrifice and its rewards, participation in divine knowledge, sacramental blessings—is very different from compulsion of nature-powers by the magic of mimicry.

And yet the ritual of worship plainly springs from the ritual of magic. Magic, as we have said, tends to cling to the lower and less clearly personified conceptions of supernature; but just as animistic elements persist into mythic thinking, so do the principles of magic persist in higher rites. Probably the only sure criterion of the transition from magic to worship, from compulsion to communion, is degree of personification: where man conceives a power as a person, capable of exercising intelligent will (as the Iroquoian *ongwe*, "man-being"), he unconsciously comes to take toward it the mental attitude which marks his intercourse with his own kind, the attitude of question and answer, gift and reward, service and mastership.

That the magic of resemblances permeates primitive theories of worship is sufficiently shown by the wide use of mummary in feasts of the gods. This was especially characteristic of ancient Mexico, where worshipers and victims were often invested with the symbols of the divinity, as if thereby to partake of the divine nature. In the Hopi dances the *katchinas* are similarly represented by the dancers. The Aztecs, in their mountain worship, made edible images of these deities, which, after being worshiped, were eaten as a kind of sacrament. Votive offerings, too, were often in the likeness of the deity: the Mantas, says Garcilasso de la Vega,<sup>11</sup> worshiped a huge emerald to which emeralds were the acceptable offering; in the Aztec worship of the rain godling pop-corn was scattered about

<sup>10</sup> 14th RBEW, II, 678.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, IX, viii.

to symbolize hail. The tears of the victims offered to the rain-gods were in Mexico, as with the Khonds of India, regarded as omens of the next season's rainfall.

7. But the general blending of mimetic magic and higher ritual elements appears most clearly in the great Indian festivals. It will suffice to describe one, the Peruvian *Citu*, as given by Garcilasso,<sup>12</sup> a festival which offers many striking analogies to certain Greek and Roman feasts. The *Citu* followed the autumn equinox, and "it was to all a time of great rejoicing, for they solemnized it when they would drive from the city and its neighborhood all the ills, the hardships, and the weaknesses that afflict mankind." The festival was introduced by a day of fasting. The night following was spent in making a kind of bread called *cancu*, which was only partially cooked. There were two sorts of this bread, prepared separately, for in the one was mixed blood drawn from the nostrils and between the eyebrows ("which is their ordinary bleeding in case of illness") of children of five and ten years. Then the celebrants bathed the body, after which, with a piece of the bread made with blood, they rubbed the various parts—head, face, stomach, shoulders, arms, legs—in order to cleanse themselves, for "they imagine that thus they banish from their bodies all sorts of disease and weakness." This ceremony occurred at the home of the eldest near relative, and when it was finished he took a portion of the dough, rubbed the door of the house with it, and left it attached to the lintel<sup>13</sup> as a sign of the purification. The high priest performed the same ceremony in the temple of the sun, and it was performed at other shrines, particularly that marking the first stopping-place of Manco Capac on his coming to Cuzco. At the palace the eldest of the uncles of the Inca officiated.

At sunrise the sun god was adored and besought to banish all ills, "interior and exterior," and the fast was broken with the bread not mixed with blood. After this, says Garcilasso, there came from the fortress an Inca of royal blood. "He is richly clad, as a messenger from the sun. His robe is drawn up about his body, and he bears a lance adorned with a fringe of vari-colored plumes, extending from butt to head, and with quantities of gold rings—like the lance which is borne as a standard in war. This runner issues from the fortress and not from the temple of the sun, because he is regarded as a messenger of war, and in the temple only the

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, vi, vii.

<sup>13</sup> At their spring-festival in honor of the maize goddess, Cinteotl, the Aztecs fastened gladiolus at the doors of their houses and sprinkled them with blood drawn from their legs and ears.

affairs of peace may be treated. He proceeds, flourishing his lance, to the center of the principal plaza of the city. There he is joined by four other Incas bearing similar lances and with their robes drawn up, as is the custom of those who run upon affairs of importance. The courier touches with his lance the lances of these four, to whom he says that the sun commands them as his agents and messengers to chase from the city and the country round about all the evils and maladies that they find. Then the four set forth by the four great roads which terminate at the city and which they regard as leading to the four quarters of the world. All the inhabitants, men and women, young and old, seeing them pass, put themselves at the doors of their houses, and acclaiming and applauding they shake their garments as if to clear them of dust, and with their hands rub head and face, arms and legs, thinking that by this means they chase from their houses the ills, so that the messengers of the sun may banish them from the city." The lances were carried by relays several leagues from the city and there planted to show that the ills were thereby banished beyond these limits.

The night following the people went forth publicly carrying torches made of plaited straw with round basket-shaped butts, and with these they traversed all the streets of the city "chasing forth with flames the ills of the night as with their lances they have exterminated those of the day." They threw the burning torches into the river, where the day before they had bathed, that the current might carry down to the sea the evils they had rid themselves of, and if any one afterwards discovered the extinguished remnant of one of these torches on the bank, it was regarded as a thing to be shunned, contagious of ill. The next day was a day of song, dancing, and general rejoicing, with great sacrifice of llamas to the sun and a feast upon the roasted flesh of the sacrificed animals, in which all shared who had taken part in the festival.

The magic character of most of the rites in the *Citu* (in which, from the stress laid upon family origins, we may suspect some element of ancestor-worship and the laying of ghosts) is sufficiently obvious: first the individual and the household, and then the city, the greater household, were symbolically purged. But along with this magic are other elements: adoration of the sun, prayer, sacrifice, and finally a holy sacrament,—communion with deity in a proper sense. The latter elements are clearly overshadowed; they do not constitute the essential part of the ceremonies; they are manifestly late additions. The whole festival is nearer the magical than the humanistic conception of religion.



The same is true of the great part of Indian religious feasts. The dances of the North American Indians are almost purely magical. The buffalo dance of the Sioux, designed to bring the game



BEAR DANCE.  
(W. T. Parker.)

when food was scarce, imitated the habits and hunting of that animal; and in some tribes when the men were off hunting the women performed dances to ensure their success. The famous



Busk (*puskita*) of the Creeks, a festival of the harvest home sometimes called the "green-corn dance," presents many analogies to the *Citu*, including fasting, purification, and the symbolic driving forth of ills. The elaborate festivals, or "dances," of the Pueblo Indians are largely symbolic prayers for rain in their arid country. And it should be noted that what is originally mere magic compulsion of nature powers may, with higher conceptions, be regarded as a prayer, acted rather than said, a dramatic representation of men's needs addressed to the givers of good.

8. As the scale of civilization ascends, magical elements sink farther and farther into the background. Among the more primitive Indians mimetic festivals, including "mysteries," or dramatic representations of myths, as well as dances, are the most conspicuous ceremonials. With the more settled and civilized peoples other elements—temple service, cult—come to the fore, and almost every type of ritualistic celebration and every conception of intercourse with deity is developed.

Of the various types of ritual observance the tribal and national festivals probably retain most pronouncedly the magical element. They are directly associated with the social welfare of the celebrants and serve to give expression to the ideal of solidarity which makes society possible; in this sense their magic is real; it has a psychical force in the consciousness of the participants, reflecting that change of mind which makes possible the development of a vast commune like the empire of Peru out of what must have been a mere anarchism analogous to that of the savage Amazonians. This social significance of the feast is well illustrated in the character of the five principal feasts of the Incas. Of these, the *Citu* was a symbolic purgation of society, probably with some reminiscence of ancestor-worship, analogous to the Roman *Lemuria* or the Greek *Anthesteria*. Of the remaining festivals, the chief was the great feast of the sun at the summer solstice, at which delegates from all parts of the empire marched before the Inca in their national costumes, bearing gifts characteristic of the products of their provinces—clearly a symbolization of the empire of the national deity. Two other festivals were connected with the production of food: these were the feast of the young vegetation in the spring, designed to avert frosts and other blights, and the harvest home in the fall, which was a minor and chiefly family festival. The remaining celebration was the occasion of the initiation of young men to warriors' rank, an annual or biennial observance the connection of which with the welfare of the State is obvious.

These feasts may be taken as generally typical of Indian tribal celebrations. Local conditions vary the period of celebration, the number, and the stress on this element or that—as the stress on rainmaking comes to characterize the “dances” of the Pueblo Indians, or as the populous pantheons of Mexico caused a great increase in the number of festivals. But the social significance remains throughout, developing from what may be termed the summation of individual into tribal “medicine” or “orenda”—as in the magic dances by which game is allured—up to the conception of a sacramental banquet of the worshipers with their god. This sacramental character has already been variously illustrated, but it is worth while to instance in the Aztec worship of Omacatl, god of banquets, the fabrication of an elongated cake which is termed a “bone of the god” and is eaten by the participants in his festival. The eating of the body of the god recurs in several cults among the Aztecs, with whom ceremonial cannibalism was customary; with the Incas, on the other hand, the typical sacrament was a feast shared by the god with his worshipers, or with such of them as were deemed related to him, for in the great feast of the sun only the “children of the sun” were allowed to partake of the vase of liquor from which their god and ancestor had first been invited to drink.

9. Rites and practices of an ascetic nature are numerous and varied throughout the Indian world. At the root of such practices is not merely the desire to placate evil powers by self-inflicted punishments, but also the purely social desire to prove publicly one's endurance and valor. The horrible tortures inflicted upon themselves by the Mandans in the so-called “sun dance” and similar practices of other Northern tribes (Father de Smet states<sup>14</sup> that the warriors of the Arikaras and Gros Ventres, in the preparatory fast previous to going on the warpath, “make incisions in their bodies, thrust pieces of wood into their flesh beneath the shoulder blade, tie leather straps to them, and let themselves be hung from a post fastened horizontally upon the edge of a chasm 150 feet deep”) are probably as much due to a desire to prove worth and endurance as to propitiate the sun or the Great Spirit.

Similarly, the fastings which introduce so many Indian festivals spring from a variety of motives. Among the hunting tribes with whom involuntary fasts were a matter of common chance, to fast frequently in times of plenty was a part of the normal training of a brave. The training began early. Dr. Eastman,<sup>15</sup> describing his

<sup>14</sup> *Life, Letters and Travels*, New York, 1905.

<sup>15</sup> *Indian Boyhood*, New York, 1902.

early childhood, says: "Sometimes my uncle would waken me very early in the morning and challenge me to fast with him all day. I had to accept the challenge. We blackened our faces with charcoal, so that every boy in the village would know that I was fasting for the day. Then the little tempters would make my life a misery until the merciful sun hid behind the western hills."

But there was also a far deeper, a mystical motive which made the fast a prominent feature of the Indian's life. The fast endured by the young Indian seeking the revelation of his tutelary has already been mentioned. Similar fasts, especially by medicine-men and women, seeking revelation in dream and vision, were common. Copway describes<sup>18</sup> in detail the visions of a young girl of his tribe (the Ojibwa) during a protracted period of fasting. It was in the summer season and her people were coasting along the lakeside. The girl was taken with a mood of pensive sadness and spent much time alone. "One evening she was seen standing on the peak of pictured rocks; and as the sun was passing the horizon, and the waves dashed furiously, she was heard to sing for the first time. Her long black hair floated upon the wind, and her voice was heard above the rustling of the leaves and the noise of the waters. When night came she could not be seen. She had fled to the rocky cave, from whence were to go up her petitions to the gods." She was not found until the fourth day, and during all that time she had tasted neither food nor drink. Her friends besought her to return to the camp, but she refused to do so until the gods were propitious to her. The night of the fifth day a young warrior appeared to her in a vision: "What will you have," he asked, "the furs from the woods—the plumes of rare birds—the animals of the forest—or a knowledge of the properties of wild flowers?" She answered: "I want a knowledge of the roots that I may relieve the nation's sufferings and prolong the lives of the aged." This was promised, but she was not yet satisfied. On following days and nights other visions came. In one of her dreams two beings conducted her to the top of a high hill, whence she could see the clouds and lightning beneath. Her companions said: "That which is before you, bordering on the great hill, is infancy. It is pleasant but dangerous. The rocks present the perilous times of life." At the very summit, where all the world was spread out below, as far as the western sea, one of the beings touched the maiden's hair, and half of it turned white. In a final dream she was asked to enter a canoe on the lake, and when she had done so, one of her visitors sang:

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*



"I walk on the waves of the sea,  
I travel o'er hill and dale."

"When becalmed," said they, "sing this, and you will hear us whis-



DREAM JOURNEY TO THE SPIRIT WORLD. PART I.

per to you." The next day, the tenth of her fasting, she permitted herself to be taken to the camp. "I have received the favor of the





DREAM JOURNEY TO THE SPIRIT WORLD. PART II.

gods," she said. "I have traveled the journey of life and have learned that I shall not die until my hair is turned white."

It is obvious that there is the making of a mystical philosophy in this vision; and in a number of cases Indian religious sects have originated from the fasting-visions of their prophets. Characteristic of such a vision is a journey into the spirit-world, whence the



DREAM JOURNEY TO THE SPIRIT WORLD. PART III.

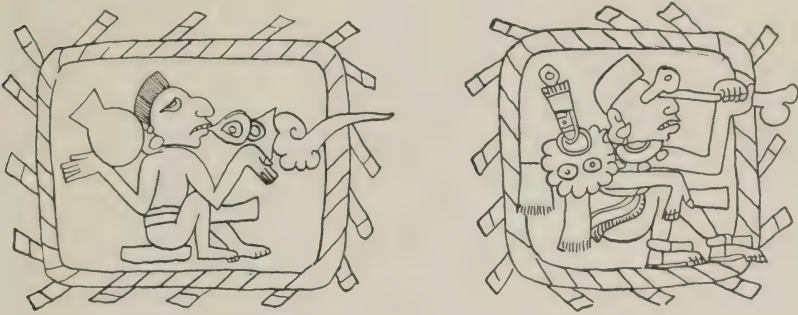
The original of this entire series was painted on a long strip of cloth by La-lu-wahk, a Pawnee, in 1875. It belongs to the Loan Exhibit of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

prophet returns to reveal "the Way" to his fellows; and in all Indian life there is nothing more pathetic and beautiful than the naive faith in these revelations.

Fasts of a purely ritualistic character naturally pertain to a more conventionalized stage of religion. In Peru two types of fasts

were observed, one perfectly rigorous, the other merely involving abstinence from meat and seasoned food. In Mexico also fasts varied in their severity. In both countries fasts were imposed upon the priests that were not observed by the commons. The Peruvian priests; Garcilasso states, fasted vicariously for the people.

Continence was enjoined as a feature of all important fasts. The notion of perpetual celibacy seems to have occurred only in Peru, where a certain number of priestesses were chosen to be "Virgins of the Sun"; they were really regarded as the Sun's wives. Garcilasso states that there was a law that a virgin who fell should be immured alive, though there was no recorded instance of occasion for the infliction of this penalty—which, like their keeping of the perpetual fire in the temple of the sun, is strikingly reminiscent of the Roman Vestals.



MEXICAN PICTOGRAPHS SHOWING FORMS OF PENANCE.

Penance for sins committed and confession of sins with a view to expiation were probably far more common than our records show. Confession and penance both appear in some North American religions of late origin, but probably from the influence of Catholic teachings. The clear case of native practice is the Aztec, recorded by Fray Bernardino de Sahagun. The confession was secret, and the priest prescribed penance according to its gravity. But, says Fray Bernardino,<sup>17</sup> "they say that the Indians awaited old age before confessing the carnal sins. It is easy to comprehend that, although they had indeed committed errors in youth, they should not confess them before arriving at an advanced age, in order not to find themselves obliged to give over these follies till the senile years!" It is only fair to add that Sahagun's own account of the eagerness of the Indians to confess to the Spanish fathers rather belies this cynicism. The Mexicans also punished severely lapses on the part of the

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, I, xii.



servitors of the gods. At the festival of the gods of rain in the sixth (Mexican) month "they chastized terribly on the waters of the lake those servants of the idols who had committed any fault in their service. Indeed they were maltreated to the point of being left for dead on the shores of the lake, where their relatives came to bear them home almost without life."<sup>18</sup>

10. Sacrificial rites have already received mention in preceding paragraphs. The motives underlying them are probably as various as the forms they assume. It seems hard to give any other motive than placation for the casting of tobacco or valuables into the waters of a river before shooting the rapids, and placation is certainly the motive which prompts offerings to smallpox. But it seems quite as certain that another motive must be sought for the great body of sacrifices of a sacramental nature, and it would seem fairly obvious that the explanation is to be found in the very ancient custom of giving food offerings to the dead. The lowest nomads practice this custom and it persists far into civilization. It is easy to see how, the idea once formed, gods come to share with ghosts this service, for the distinction of god and ghost is very slow in forming. Furthermore, after prowess as a warrior, the greatest social virtue of the Indian is to be a successful hunter and feast maker, and the greatest honor he could bestow upon his gods would be to invite their participation in his feasts. Doubtless, too, the influence of totemism must be taken into account in the evolution of sacramental feasts: the totem is at once a god and an ancestral spirit, forming a natural link between the feared ghost of a kinsman and a true nature deity. Yet another and worthier motive is to be found in that complex state of mind which underlies man's desire to prove himself fit for the god's service—fit in his power of self-deprivation and again in the completeness of his trust in his god. Such a motive appears very clearly in Dr. Eastman's account<sup>19</sup> of his first childish offering, when he was called upon to offer up without blenching, in a wild and lonely cavern, which was the shrine of "the Great Mystery," that which was dearest to his boy's heart, his dog. The lesson was in self-control, but the stimulus to it was high-hearted devotion. A somewhat similar motive very possibly underlies the strange custom of "potlatch" of the Indians of Alaska and British Columbia, a custom which pronounces as the most praiseworthy of a man's deeds his giving over to his fellows, at a great feast which he prepares for them, all his worldly possessions, the accumulation of long years.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II, vi.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*



That this custom may have a religious significance (and it is difficult to find any feature of aboriginal life not to some extent religious)



MEXICAN ALTAR-PIECE FROM PALENQUE, SHOWING CHILD SACRIFICE.

is indicated by its analogue in Mexico. As an act of exceptional devotion in the worship of the god of mat-weavers, Napatecutli, a man might make a banquet where, after songs and dances in honor

of the god, he gave away all his possessions, saying: "I take it as a matter of no moment to be left without resources provided my patron god be satisfied with this feast; whether he supply me once more or leave me in want, be his will accomplished."

The acceptability of the offering to the god, and hence the favor which this acceptability implies, is already a step in auspicy. The further step of making sacrifices for discovering the god's attitude is natural to take, and divination was one of the chief motives underlying the sacrifices of the more advanced peoples in America, as it has been of pagan peoples the world over.

The forms and materials of offerings may be resumed in general categories. Votive offerings in the most primitive stage consist merely of cherished possessions of whatever nature; later, they have some special reference to the needs or character of the deity. In Peru the temples of the sun were filled with gold and silver images of all sorts of animals and plants, images of men along with them. In the Hopi ceremonies sticks representing corn as well as actual ears of corn are placed before representations of the rain and cereal divinities—so clearly symbolizing the gifts expected that one might almost term them material prayers. Feathers, ornaments, figurines, and the like, are of course common offerings.

The use of incense in the strict sense is not widely recorded. The Siksika are reported to have in each tipi an altar (a mere hole in the earth) where sweet gum is daily burned, and the Aztecs are said to have burned copal as incense before their gods. If the ceremonial smoking of tobacco and other odoriferous herbs may be so termed, the burning of incense was very widely practised. As a matter of fact the smoking of the pipe is an important religious function, and the pipebowl has even been termed an "altar" by some students of Indian conceptions. Pine needles are burned for incense by the Pueblo Indians, and the Hopi kivas are filled with the fragrance of burning juniper tops. Perhaps the most interesting offering of sweet scent to divinities was the Mexican offering of flowers, especially to the *tlaloque*; and in the third Mexican month the "first fruits" of the flowers were offered to Tlaloc at the festival of that god, previous to which occasion "no one dared breathe the fragrance of a flower."

Offerings of food and drink, first to the dead as provision for the journey into the other world and then to other powers and deities, occur in a variety of forms. The Peruvians made libation by putting the finger into the cup before drinking and then waving it in the air until the sun had drunk the offering, following this action

by twice or thrice "kissing the air" as a special sign of adoration; the Mexicans, before tasting food, cast a portion into the hearthfire to satisfy that divinity. Vegetables, fruits, and cereals belong to the regular materia of sacrifice in both North and South America, and in Peru, at least, appear to have been burned on altars. The bodies of animals also are undoubtedly in part food offerings, but this is certainly not their major significance.

The motives underlying animal sacrifices are exceedingly complex. The sacrifice of the favorite dog, cited above, is clearly of the nature of a votive offering; it is a case of surrender of that which is treasured; and perhaps most of the sacrificing of dogs and ponies by North American Indians is of this nature, though it is easy to infer for it a quite different origin, namely, as an outgrowth of the slaughtering of favorite animals at the grave to accompany the dead into the next world. Again, we have seen that animal (and, especially with the Mexicans, human) sacrifice was frequently involved in the sacraments, or feasts shared by worshiper and deity. The notion of a mystic union with the god is implied in the Mexican habit of devouring the theanthropic victim in various rites, which very likely harks back to the more elementary belief that the "magic" of a slain enemy is absorbed in eating his body or drinking his blood. That this belief affects other animals than man appears in the eating of animals not ordinarily regarded as food by medicine-men and others who wished to gain the particular powers of these animals.

Magical reasonings, also, loom large in animal sacrifices. The Mexican habit of lacerating victims to be sacrificed to the gods of rain, so as to cause them to bleed, or of passing through fire those to be sacrificed to the god of fire, plainly indicate magic antecedents. The Pawnee sacrifice of a captured girl whose body was torn to pieces and the fragments buried in the fields to render them fertile, is again a case of obvious magic. The Peruvian preference for twin lambs, as indicating greater fecundity, points to the same type of thinking. Among the Incas black lambs were the favorites for sacrifice, black lambs being less likely than white ones to have spots of another color, and so being regarded as a more perfect breed. But the Collas, whose chief deity was a white llama, preferred white lambs for their sacrifices.

Sacrifice for the purpose of divination was general both in Mexico and Peru. It is probable that no sacrifice was made without prognostication of its favor or disfavor with the god, and thence naturally arose the habit of making sacrifices whenever prognostics of coming fortunes were particularly desired. The divination might



be by omens drawn from the behavior of the victim, as when the Aztecs regarded sadness on the part of the theanthropic victim of Toci, mother of the gods, as betokening ill, or the tears of victims offered to the rain gods as foretelling rain; or it might be that the divination was by extispicium, as seems to have been the common mode in Peru, where there was an elaborate code of signs, the supremely favorable prognostic being drawn when the lungs continued to palpitate after being drawn from the animal's body.

Possibly the strongest motive of all that actuate animal sacrifice is to be found in the occult significance of blood. Bloodletting in some form or other is a constant accompaniment of all sorts of rites. Among the wilder Indians it was common to gash the body as a sign of mourning and to remain without washing until the dried blood was worn away. The Mexicans similarly gashed or pierced themselves till the blood ran at the altars of certain of their gods; and with the blood of victims, human or animal, these altars were constantly smeared. In their sacrifices, too, both in Mexico and Peru, it was the heart of the victim that formed the real offering. The heart was torn from the still living victim and immolated as the god's essential portion. Facts such as these can best be interpreted in the light of the ancient and deep-seated belief common to all primitive men, that the blood is in some occult and intimate sense the seat of vital strength and the proper rejuvenator of the ailing soul.

II. The general subject of sacrifice is not to be passed over without some special discussion of that feature of it for which America is particularly notorious. Human sacrifice was practised in varying degrees from end to end of the two continents. In Mexico it reached a scale never elsewhere equalled, and the prevalence of cannibalism in connection with it has made the practice even more repellent. The ready inference has been of the exceptional cruelty and brutishness of the Indians, and while this inference is no doubt to some extent justified, there are yet considerations modifying the harshness of first-off appearances.

It is necessary in the first place to note the roots of the custom among the lowest savages and to see what its meaning is for them. Probably there is more or less of untutored exultation, a kind of egoistic afflatus prompted by the consciousness of having in his power an enemy whom he has feared, that incites the savage captor to dispatch his prisoners, but such a motive could never become the basis of a custom. Similarly, a cruel delight in the buffoon-like antics of the tortured person is no adequate account of the persist-

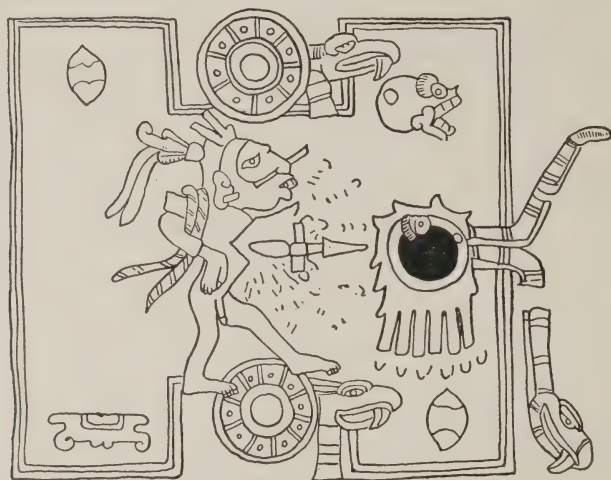
ence of torture. Superstitious reasons always underlie wide-spread racial habits.

And of such reasons, with respect to ceremonial man-killing, two are of early and almost universal occurrence. The first of these connects with belief in ghost-life. A dead man, especially if he has been powerful in life, must be placated, lest he utilize his freedom from possible retaliation to plague the living. For this purpose, he must have service in the future world, the service of subjects, slaves, or captives,—souls little to be feared in comparison with his,—while, if he have come to his death violently, he must be revenged on his slayers ere his soul can rest and his ghost be duly “laid.” These motives are obviously at the basis of the great mass of sacrificial rites designed to honor or appease the dead. The Assiniboin explained their extreme cruelty in massacring the women and children of a captured camp of Blackfeet on the ground that it was necessary to satisfy the *manes* of their own people who had been slain by this tribe, and it is known that captives were much more likely to be spared by the North Americans if none of the capturing force were slain. The custom of putting to death captives and inferiors at the grave of a prominent warrior is too familiar to need particularization. That his wives were also put to death was as natural as that his weapons should be ceremonially broken or interred with him. But it should be remembered that the perfectly unquestioning belief in a continued life which such practices implied robbed the sacrifice of much of its obloquy. Indeed, such sacrifices were often voluntary. Garcilasso states<sup>20</sup> that “when the Inca or some one of the great lords of the country came to die, their servants and the wives whom they had most loved immolated themselves by letting themselves be interred alive in the grave, saying that their keenest desire was to go to serve in the other world their kings and their good lords.” Among the Natches of North America persons are said to have applied as long as ten years beforehand for the privilege of accompanying their chief in death. There is an account of an Indian chief of the Northwest who caused himself to be buried alive in the grave of his favorite son; and a Mbaya woman, a convert to Catholicism, when she found that there were to be no sacrifices at the funeral of a chief’s daughter, asked a fellow tribesman to knock her in the head that she might go to serve the maiden in the other world; the request was immediately complied with.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, VI, v.

<sup>21</sup> These stories appear in *Origin of Primitive Superstitions*, by Rushton M. Dorman, Philadelphia, 1881,—a work which brings together under classified heads many facts from diverse sources.

A second and almost equally potent motive to human sacrifice is for the purpose of assimilating the qualities of the slain person by devouring some portion of his body. This is the obvious explanation of the cannibalism practised by the Mexicans in connection with their sacrifices, and the rudiments of the idea are found among the lowest savages. The cannibal tribes of Brazil not only eat their slain enemies, in the belief that whatever courage these may have possessed will be thereby acquired, but they eat the bodies of their own children in the expectation of spiritually uniting with them. Similarly, the Ximana burn the bones of their dead and mingle the ashes with their drink. In North America many of the most advanced tribes were in the habit of eating portions of their enemies'



MEXICAN PICTOGRAPH ILLUSTRATING MODE OF HUMAN SACRIFICE.

bodies, especially the heart, in order to absorb their desirable qualities. The stress placed on the heart in these practices gives a clue to the development of the form of sacrificial execution (wholly analogous to the "Bloody Eagle" of our own Norse ancestors) which prevailed in Mexico, and which the Peruvians carried over from earlier human sacrifices to the sacrifices of animals.

Rites originating in worship of ghosts are transferred instinctively to nature deities, and the motives just discussed (though doubtless complicated by such motives as prompt sacrifice in general) are a fair explanation of the source of the human sacrifice practised in Mexico on a huge scale, and in Peru and elsewhere among the more settled Indians on a far more limited scale. The



reason for the difference of degree which has made the Aztec civilization loom so detestable deserves a brief consideration.

It is widely held by students of comparative religion that civilizations generally pass through a stage at which human sacrifice is practised, the human victim eventually giving way to an animal surrogate. In America, though the conception of sacrifice was widely developed, there were but two centers—Mexico and Peru—where the social development was such that sacrificial rites had come to predominate over magical, and where civilization had reached a stage at which human sacrifice (judged by Old World standards) should have begun to be archaic. In one of these two centers—Peru—it had become archaic, at least with the advanced population, who, if Garcilasso is trustworthy, waged a conscious propaganda against it. But Peru possessed a worthy surrogate, the llama, the only considerable domestic animal in the two continents. Where sacrificial demands are extensive, no wild animal and no tame carnivore, as the dog, will answer; there must be herds, prolific and at hand. Mexico had no such animals. Apart from men, quails formed the principal animal sacrifice; and it would seem to be no great stretch of inference to find in this fact the main reason for the extensiveness and persistence of human sacrifice in that country.

And for what it is worth as a palliative for horrors that in the reading can only seem unredeemed, the Mexicans believed that at least such of their human victims as bore a theanthropic character were destined to a far happier lot in the future world than was in store for ordinary mortals: like the warrior slain in battle, the sacrificial victim might expect his soul to proceed at once to the mansions of the sun—contrast enough to the realm of rayless night which was the destination of those who died a natural death. Furthermore, if we may judge by some of their world-weary utterances, the Aztecs did not look upon death as an unmitigated evil; in language worthy of Ecclesiastes, they addressed the new-born child:<sup>22</sup> "O sorrow! thou hast been sent into this world, place of fatigue, of grief and of discontent, where reside sore labor and deep affliction, where woes and sufferings reign in all their might. Yea, thou art come to earth not for rejoicing and happiness, but to suffer affliction and torment in flesh and bone. Here thou art doomed to the extremity of toil, for it is for this that thou hast been sent into the world." One might surmise that not a little of this *Weltschmerz* was due to the influence of the bloodiest religion the world has ever known.

12. Of the various modes in which the power approached was

<sup>22</sup> Sahagun, *op. cit.*

regarded as giving response, extispicium was undoubtedly the commonest. Human and animal sacrifices were largely made for this purpose, and it was practised not only by the more civilized peoples of the south, but also by some of the hunting tribes, who occasionally used buffaloes for the purpose. But besides this form of divination nearly every known type was developed. The Incas had found augury in the flights of birds and drew prognostics from the stars, while comets foretold disaster; earthquakes, tidal waves, circles about the moon, were all portents to be read by the omen-wise. A similar science of signs was developed in Mexico, as is shown by the list of omens of disaster which Prescott gives as precursing the coming of the Spaniards:<sup>23</sup> "In 1510 the great lake of Tezcucó, without the occurrence of a tempest, or earthquake, or any visible cause, became violently agitated, overflowed its banks, and, pouring into the streets of Mexico, swept off many of the buildings by the fury of the waters. In 1511, one of the turrets of the great temple took fire, equally without any apparent cause, and continued to burn in defiance of all attempts to extinguish it. In the following years, three comets were seen; and not long before the coming of the Spaniards a strange light broke forth in the east. It spread broad at its base on the horizon, and rising in a pyramidal form tapered off as it approached the zenith. It resembled a vast sheet or flood of fire, emitting sparkles, or, as an old writer expresses it, 'seemed thickly powdered with stars.' At the same time low voices were heard in the air, and doleful wailings, as if to announce some strange, mysterious calamity."

Prophecies from a more direct source were believed to come through those men who had learned the secret way to the other world. The gift of prophecy is often thought to come during the fast which is a part of the youth's preparation for maturity among North American tribes, and it is often vouched for by ability to do various tricks and produce effects of a kind strongly suggestive of the spiritualistic medium. Among the Ojibwas, for example, "the Jesakkid can, in the twinkling of an eye, disengage himself of the most complicated tying of cords and ropes. The lodge used by this class of men consists of four poles planted in the ground, forming a square of three or four feet and upward in diameter, around which are wrapped birch bark, robes, or canvas in such a way as to form an upright cylinder. Communion is held with the turtle, who is the most powerful manido [*manitou*] of the Jesakkid, and through him with numerous other malevolent manidos, especially the Animiki,

<sup>23</sup> *Conquest of Mexico.*

or thunder-bird. When the prophet has seated himself within his lodge the structure begins to sway violently from side to side, loud thumping noises are heard within, denoting the arrival of manidos, and numerous voices and laughter are distinctly audible to those without. Questions may then be put to the prophet and, if everything is favorable, the response is not long in coming."<sup>24</sup> Intercourse with the unseen world in trance was, of course, common; and occasionally the prophet managed to fortify his claim to such communion by verifying his predictions: at all events, the famous Assiniboin chief, Tchatka, is said to have obtained his hold over his tribe by predictions of the deaths of his rivals which he managed to fulfil by an adept use of poisons.

Dreams are very generally regarded as oracular, or even as veritable visitations from tutelar powers, a dream of a powerful shaman or of a chief or king being naturally viewed as more important than that of one having less significant connection with the superhuman realm. But oracles were also derived from the lips of idols. The Incas, usually quick to destroy the cults of conquered peoples, allowed the Huancas to retain their worship of an oracular idol while forbidding the worship of their tribal deity, the dog; and among the conquered Yuncas was another speaking statue, Rimac, "he who speaks," in a valley of the same name, which became a sort of South American Delphi, consulted by alien chiefs and the conquering Incas as well as by those with whom the cult was native. The responses of Rimac were sometimes "confused and ambiguous, promising neither good nor ill," but there were priests and trained diviners to interpret them.

But with all these various forms of special revelation, it should be remembered that the ordinary response which the Indian expected for his devotions was less direct: it was not foreknowledge nor advice, but success in the enterprise in hand, continuance of the right to live, food, victory, social prosperity; and at the basis of this expectation lurks the old motive of the compulsoriness of magical prefigurements.

13. Omens require skilled interpreters that they may be read, and every form of ritual, as it acquires elaboration, becomes a special mystery which only those carefully initiated to its usages and secrets are competent to interpret. The primitive, simple rites, those prompted by mere instinct, as placation by food offering, pass readily from individual to individual by imitation, if indeed they be not naturally originated by each person separately; and customs

<sup>24</sup> 7th RBEW, p. 158.



of greater complication, as formal sacrifice or use of magic, may be practised by all the individuals of a tribe, and handed on, without priestly specialization, from parent to child. But a very little advance in social complication is sure to be reflected in ritual and speedily to result in the formation of classes of adepts to whom the direction of ceremonials is referred. So priesthoods arise.

The social beginnings of religion far antedate the culture of the lowest living savages. Ghost or ancestor-worship (if by this we may import any form of "tendance" of the dead) must be as old as burial, or any special care of the dead body, and ancestor-worship is already a society religion; it represents the cult of a group—family or clan—not that of an individual. And if we are to conceive of primitive hordes as made up of families, it is apparent that the seeds of specialization are already sown; we have already, in dim forecast, an Inca clan, descended from one conquering hero, to whom in future days are to be entrusted special privileges and ceremonies when the worship of the deified ancestor comes to be imposed upon the conquered.

But ancestor-worship is early complicated by another form of social specialization—totem-worship. Whatever may have been the origin, whatever may be the secret of the much-discussed totem, there can be no question of its comparatively wide prevalence in America, nor yet of its essential function, viz., to systematize and solidify clan and family organization. That it does this by means of a name, a symbol, and that the social sanction of this symbol should assume a religious form, only illustrates once again the correlation between growth in powers of vicarious thought and social advance. The totem is primarily a recognition sign; but the sanctity with which the primitive mind enlarges a name, or any token, and the tabus and sanctions with which it is speedily encompassed, give it a place among the powers of nature. And when it assumes a material likeness (whether for purposes of magic or of heraldry), the extreme readiness of the imagination to identify associated objects affords easy route to the reification and deification of the sign. Thus we have the whole congeries of kindreds named after animals, plants, and what-not, each clan finding not only a recognition sign but a tutelary in its totemic emblem. That the deified emblem should eventually be regarded as a clan ancestor (and that so should ensue all the puzzling interplay of totemic tabus) is an easy inference from the known habits of mind.

Naturally totemic and ancestor worship take the form of ceremonials in which all the members of the clan participate and from

which the members of all other clans are excluded; the clan gods have interest only in the clan members. And so in the tribe or village composed of several clans, each preserves its own cult and ceremonies—rites which not only bring to each clan member the benefits designed, but form a public sanction of the participant's social status. But, to a large extent, the interests of the clan are also interests of the tribal community, and so it comes about—even after tribal rites have been introduced—that the clan continues to perform its own rites, and for the sake of the tribe as well as, or because, for its own sake. Illustration is the practice of the totem



ANTELOPE AND SNAKE PRIESTS.  
Opening of the Dance at Oraibi. (Fewkes.)

kins of certain Siouan tribes of performing magic rites designed to insure the increase of the animal with which they deem themselves specially related in order that there may be plenty of game for the tribe. Illustration, again, in a more complex society, is the Hopi prayer for rain conducted by the famous Snake and Antelope fraternities. These fraternities are controlled by the combined Chua and Ala clans, but the rite is for the welfare of the whole people.

In the tribal community the more powerful clans readily gain a pre-eminence for their cults, not merely by reason of political

strength but also by imaginative appeal—the evidence of divine favor which their prosperity reveals. Likely, too, the accident of having for totem an animal of special economic value may give predominance; at least it is a legitimate hypothesis that the cases recorded by Garcilasso of Peruvian peoples who worshiped the animal upon which they chiefly subsisted may represent cults of totemic origin, the impetus to which was given by increase-magic similar to that of the Sioux. And it would be only natural that the favored clan should eventually form a Levitical caste having in charge the state rites. Thus certain clans attain priestly privileges in their



THE ANTELOPE DANCE AT ORAIBI.

(Fewkes.)

character of keepers of the more potent mysteries. The individual no longer wholly performs his own ceremonies; communion is vicarious, undertaken for him by those holding the more advantageous position with deity.

Of course within the clan itself a similar development takes place. As ceremonials become traditional, it naturally devolves upon the more capable of the clan elders to conduct them and to instruct with greater care those of the young of their kin who show special aptitude. Still, even in well advanced societies, considerable initiative may be left to the individual. Among the Hopis, Mr.



Fewkes states,<sup>25</sup> "not only have clans introduced new katchinas from time to time, but individuals have done the same."

But individual and tribal as well as clan rites tend to fall into the hands of special classes of persons. In the former—the primitive animistic and fetishistic worships of the individual—the mediator is the "medicine-man" or shaman, one who, like the Jesakkid, is specially gifted in powers of communication with the unseen. Such a man may also become the leader in tribal ceremonies, or again these may be largely intrusted to a society of initiates, such as the Ojibwa Midewin. Eventually the sense of solidarity may warrant



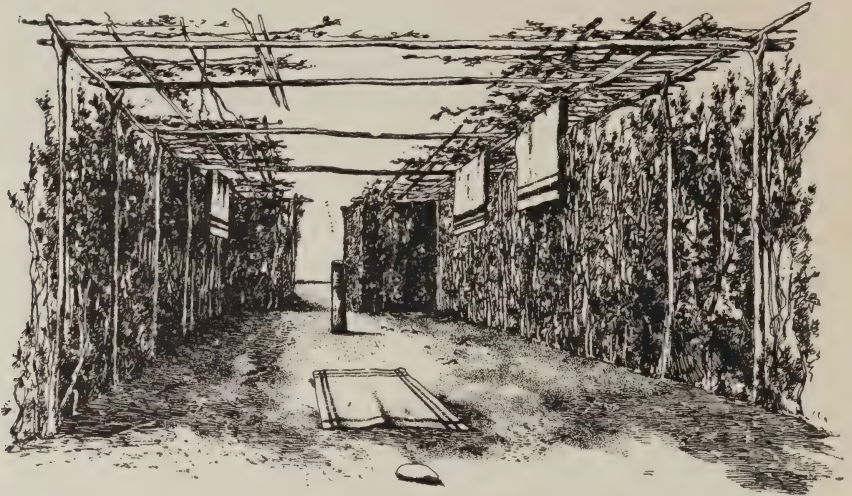
SNAKE PRIESTS WITH REPTILES.

(Fewkes.)

the passage of certain ceremonies from the tribe to its confederates or allies, and a special delegation of instructed and competent men will be sent to transmit the rite. Such is the case with the so-called Hako (see below), which passed not only from tribe to tribe, but from linguistic stock to linguistic stock, until it became the common property of a majority of the plains peoples. So again, it was necessary for the Incas, in their great military proselytizing to the cult of the sun, to leave with each conquered or converted people certain men capable of instructing in the appropriate rites.

<sup>25</sup> *Loc. cit.*

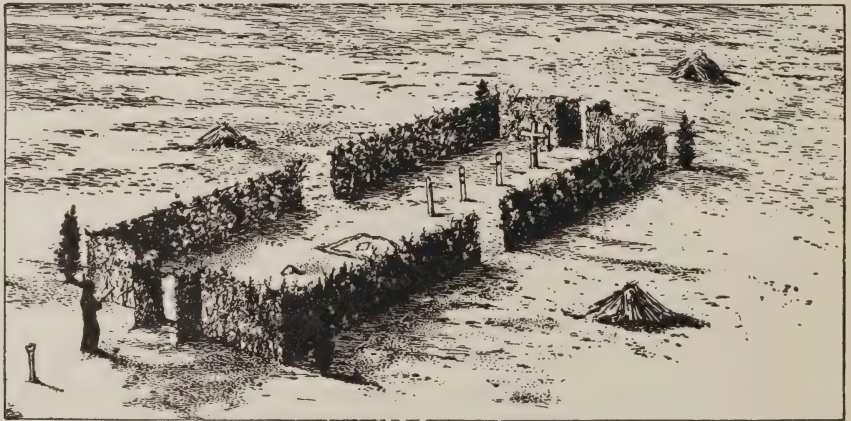
In all of these phases of worship we see the emergence of the priestly idea, which, in the civilized nations of the south, reached an old-world definiteness of development. There different temples



MIDEWIWIN LODGE, FIRST DEGREE, INTERIOR.

(W. J. Hoffman.)

and cults had their separate priesthoods, with high priests at their heads, while there were religious houses for both boys and girls into which those were taken who were to be trained to special service.



MIDEWIWIN LODGE, FOURTH DEGREE, EXTERIOR.

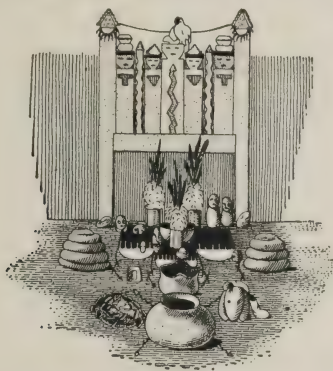
(W. J. Hoffman.)

14. The rites which we have hitherto considered have been of two main types: magical rites, designed to compel unseen powers

to the performer's desire; and the rites of service, whether of the nature of placation or of pleasuring ("tendance"). There remains to be considered a third form of communion: direct supplication, prayer.

Expression of desire is the root of language, and it is, therefore, an idle quest to ask after the origin of any instinctive form of it. But we may, in a general way, classify some of the elementary types of prayer as having a more or less conventionalized character.

It is first to be noted that prayer is not necessarily vocal. It may be conducted by symbols, sign language; and signs are practically always retained with it: that is, there are conventional postures and gestures with which he who prays naturally or customarily accompanies his words. The beginning and end of almost every formal address to deity by the North American tribes was accompanied by a raising of the calumet or other token. Garcilasso



SIA ALTAR, WITH PRAYER PLUMES AND OFFERINGS.

(After M. C. Stevenson in 23d RBEW.)

describes a peculiar Peruvian gesture of adoration made by "kissing the air," which he says was performed when approaching an idol or adoring the sun. Father de Smet, at a feast among the Blackfeet, was requested by a chief to "speak again to the Great Spirit before commencing the feast. I made the sign of the cross," he says,<sup>26</sup> "and said the prayer. All the time it lasted, all the savage company, following their chief's example, held their hands raised toward heaven: the moment it was ended, they lowered their right hands to the ground. I asked the chief for an explanation of this ceremony. 'We raise our hands,' he replied, 'because we are wholly dependent on the Great Spirit; it is his liberal hand that supplies all our wants. We strike the ground afterward, because we are miserable beings, worms crawling before his face.'"

<sup>26</sup> *Op. cit.*



But other symbols beside gestures are employed. The Zuñis make extensive use of prayer plumes in their worship of nature spirits and ancestors. In a ceremony in which she took part Mrs. Stevenson describes their *modus operandi*:<sup>27</sup> "After the telikinawe (prayer plumes) are all stood in the ground each person takes a pinch of meal brought by the mother-in-law in a cloth and, holding the meal near the lips, repeats a prayer for health, long life, many clouds, much rain, food, and raiment, and the meal is sprinkled thickly over the plumes.... These plumes remain uncovered until sunset the following day, that the Sun Father, in passing over the



ONSAWKIE WITH PRAYER-STICK.

road of day, may receive the prayers breathed upon the meal and into the plumes, the spiritual essence of the plumes conveying the breath prayers to him."

In many cases the symbolic objects used as prayers acquire a sanctity equal to or greater than that of a fetish or idol. This was especially true of the calumet and of the feathered wands employed in the Hako ceremonials. The prayer sticks used in various Indian religions in a manner analogous to the Catholic rosary also acquire a fetishistic sacredness. These prayer sticks are small strips of wood engraved with symbolic characters. Their use among the followers

<sup>27</sup> "The Zuni Indians," 23d RBEW.

of the Kickapoo prophet Keokuk is described as follows:<sup>28</sup> "They reckon five of these [engraved] characters or marks. The first represents the heart, the second the heart and flesh, the third life, the fourth their names, the fifth their families. During the service they run over these marks several times. First the person imagines himself as existing upon earth, then he draws near the house of God, etc. Putting their finger on the lowest mark they say, 'O our Father, make our hearts like thy heart, as good as thine, as strong as thine.—As good as thy house, as good as the door of thy house, as hard and as good as the earth around thy house, as strong as thy walking staff. O our Father, make our hearts and our flesh like thy heart and thy flesh.—As powerful as thy heart and thy flesh.—Like thy house and thy door and thy staff, etc. O our Father, place our names beside thine—think of us as thou thinkest of thy house, of thy door, of the earth around thy house, etc.'" This prayer is "repeated to satiety" and in "a monotonous musical tone."

In this prayer there are to be noted two characteristics bearing upon the early psychology of prayer communion. First, it is sung or chanted. Song plays an important rôle in the life of the Indian. It accompanies all his ceremonies, it is the music to which he dances, even his games and gambling are accommodated to its measures. It is a spontaneous and natural expression of his emotion under all of life's stresses, and it is only to be expected that his prayers should mostly take this form. Indeed, it may be doubted if all his songs are not of the nature of prayer, either plea or thanksgiving. Some such case is surely implied by his peculiar reverence for proprietary rights in song. Mr. Frederick Burton, who has made an especial study of the music of the Ojibwas, says<sup>29</sup> that "the composer is the owner, and wherever ancient customs are still preserved no Indian ventures to sing a song that does not belong to his family." This plainly indicates the sacred character of formalized emotional expression: there is prayer in the very utterances of emotion, and wherever the expression is such as to stir the emotions of listening men, it is felt that it cannot be less mandatory upon the gods.

The second point to be noted is the painstaking repetition (in the example as given, much abridged); the worshiper goes over the ground step by step, lest any elision of utterance leave a loophole for misunderstanding or failure. This is practically name magic. It is the principle of the incantation and the spell. The name is not merely a mark of identification; it is a part of the essential being; it is a kind of spiritual essence. In its utterance there is appropriation

<sup>28</sup> De Smet, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> See *Craftsman*, July, 1907.

of the veritable existence of the named object and control of its activities. This is a commonplace of savage thinking which lies at the base of the formulization of prayer.

Doubtless there is a secondary, a less conscious motive underlying repetitive expression. For repetition reacts upon the mind, concentrating attention upon the object of desire and adding to the magic of naming the magic of thinking—the potency which the mere thinking of anything exerts to bring that thing to pass. The primitive mind does not distinguish readily between truth and conception, fact and myth, and it is not surprising that its own activities should seem to it to exercise occult causation (a belief which the more enlightened are slow to let go).

These various motives are admirably illustrated by the Hako ceremonial. The Hako consists of songs and dances with much mimetic action, embodied in some twenty rituals. The first stanza of the first part of the first ritual is as follows:

“Ho-o-o!  
I'hare, 'hare, 'ahe!  
I'hare, 'hare, 'ahe!  
Heru! Awahokshu. He!  
I'hare, 'hare, 'ahe!”

This stanza (there are thirteen in the song, varying only in the fourth verse) is explained by Miss Fletcher in detail:<sup>80</sup> *Ho-o-o* is an introductory exclamation. The verse three times repeated is made up of variants of *Ihare*, which is an “exclamation that conveys the intimation that something is presented to the mind on which one must reflect, must consider its significance and its teaching.” *Heru* is an “exclamation of reverent feeling, as when one is approaching something sacred.” *Awahokshu* is “a composite word; *awa* is a part of *Tiráwa*, the supernatural powers, and *hokshu* means sacred, holy; thus the word *Awahokshu* means the abode of the supernatural powers, the holy place where they dwell.” *He* is again a variant of *Ihare*. Many of the songs are of a more dramatic character, and some have stories connected with them which must be understood to make them comprehensible, but this stanza gives a fair example of the frame of mind in which they are conceived and sung.

The ceremony of the Hako as a whole is more analogous to the mystery than to any other form of rite, for it embraces in its purpose the teaching of truths and the sanctifying of the participants as well as a plea for blessings. But that the Indians themselves

<sup>80</sup> “The Hako: A Pawnee Ceremony,” 22d RBEW, II.



consider it as primarily a prayer is evidenced by the statement of the leader: "We take up the Hako in the spring when the birds are mating, or in the summer when the birds are nesting and caring for their young, or in the fall when the birds are flocking, but not in the winter when all things are asleep. With the Hako we are praying for the gift of life, of strength, of plenty, and, of peace, so we must pray when life is stirring everywhere." This is prayer, but it is prayer not far removed from magic.

Of prayers evincing a more individualized religious consciousness examples are not wanting, especially among the more cultured tribes. The lengthy Aztec supplications which have been preserved for us in what must be an approximately trustworthy form have been termed "penitential psalms." They are certainly replete with poetic imagery, though their perusal is likely to leave one with the feeling that the Aztecs were more keenly impressed with the smart and dolor of the general context of life than with any individual conviction of sin. Fine types of devotion are nevertheless not wanting. Father de Smet<sup>31</sup> records the supplication of an Indian who had lost three calumets (than which no greater loss could readily befall): "O Great Spirit, you who see all things and undo all things, grant, I entreat you, that I may find what I am looking for; and yet let thy will be done." This prayer, the Father comments, should have been addressed to God.

15. But we have yet to reach the most characteristic and heartfelt type of Indian religious experience—religious values as they strike home in the individual life. There can be no question but that as a race the Indians are born mystics, and it is the mystic consciousness—in trance and vision—which is the most impressive feature of their religious life.

The mysticism is begun already in the Indian's special view of nature. For nature is to him endued with an inner, hidden life having passions and volitions analogous to man's, so that her whole external form is but the curtaining outer flesh of this inner light. An animist is an incipient pantheist, and your pantheist is but a sophisticated, ratiocinating mystic.

Phases of Indian mysticism have come to the fore repeatedly in preceding paragraphs. Reliance upon dreams, the visions brought on by fasting, the trance and mediumship of shamans and prophets, soul journeys to the spirit world—all these are phases of the underlying belief that man may find within himself revelation of a higher life, that the veil which parts the seen from the unseen is but of the

<sup>31</sup> *Op. cit.*

flimsiest. Possession by a higher power, *enthusiasm*, is also a tenet of Indian mysticism, taking form amongst those peoples who had invented intoxicants in the induced inspiration of drunkenness. Again, there was belief in the familiar spirit, the *daimon*. A Pend d'Oreille prophet had foretold precisely a Blackfoot attack upon his people. When about to be baptized, he explained his gift: "I am called the great doctor, yet never have I given myself up to the practices of juggling, nor condescended to exercise its deceptions. I derive all my strength from prayer; when in a hostile country, I address myself to the Master of Life and offer him my heart and soul, entreating him to protect us against our enemies. A voice had already warned me of coming danger; I then recommend prudence and vigilance throughout the camp; for the monitory voice has never deceived me. I have now a favor to request: the mysterious voice calls me by the name Chalax, and, if you will permit, I desire to bear that name until my death."<sup>32</sup> Black Coyote, an Arapaho marked by seventy patterned scars where strips of skin had been removed, explained them to Mr. James Mooney.<sup>33</sup> Several of his children had died in rapid succession. In expiation, to save his family, he undertook a four days fast. During the fast he heard a voice, "somewhat resembling the cry of an owl or the subdued bark of a dog," telling him that he must cut out seventy pieces of skin and offer them to the sun. He immediately cut out seven pieces, held them out to the sun, prayed, and buried them. But the sun was not satisfied, and he was warned in a vision that the full number must be sacrificed.

Black Coyote was a leader in the Ghost Dance in his tribe, and it was through him that Mr. Mooney gained his first insight into the Indian understanding of this mystical religion. The Ghost Dance religion is the latest of a long series of Messianic religious movements whereby the Indians have looked for an eventual release from white domination and the eventual restoration of their primitive state. Doubtless Christian doctrines have had an influence in giving form to the idea, and its recurrence and spread is to be largely accounted for by the fact of Indian contact with a strange and troubling race—a contact which has tended to awaken a sense of closer relationship and ethnic solidarity among the native tribes and to stimulate the Indian mind to many unwonted ways of thought. But in their inception these religions, none the less, bear a thoroughly aboriginal cast. They come as revelations to the prophets who are

<sup>32</sup> De Smet, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> 14th RBEW. II.



THE GHOST DANCE: PRAYER. (After Mooney in 14th RBEW, facing p. 927.)



their founders, come in trance and dream, and in large part their *modus operandi* is to induce trance and dream in their adherents—usually in the dances and fastings, perhaps hypnotisms, which center the ceremonial.

Wovoka, the prophet of the Ghost Dance religion, received his revelation at about the age of eighteen. To quote Mr. Mooney's account: "On this occasion the 'sun died' (was eclipsed) and he fell asleep in the daytime and was taken up to the other world. Here he saw God, with all the people who had died long ago engaged in their oldtime sports and occupations, all happy and forever young. It was a pleasant land and full of game. After showing him all, God told him he must go back and tell his people they must be good and love one another, have no quarreling and live in peace with the whites; that they must work and not lie or steal; that they must put away all the old practices that savored of war; that if they faithfully obeyed his instructions they would at last be united with their friends in this other world, where there would be no more death or sickness or old age. He was then given the dance which he was commanded to bring back to his people. By performing this dance at intervals, for five consecutive days each time, they would secure this happiness to themselves and hasten the event."

It is little wonder that as this revelation passed from tribe to tribe it came to mean a promise of restoration, here on this earth, of the old life the Indian still holds dear. The whites were to be forced back by the hand of God, the Indian dead were to come to life and re-people the land, the herds of buffalo were to be restored, plenty was to prevail forever. And the dance became the occasion of vision of this blessed state, a ghostly realization of the hope deferred sent for the comfort of those wearied in waiting.

How closely the utterances of the Indian may approach to those of the white mystic is shown in the account given by a Puget Sound prophet, "John Slocum," of his revelation.<sup>34</sup> "At night my breath was out and I died. All at once I saw a shining light—great light—trying my soul. I looked and saw my body had no soul—looked at my own body—it was dead.... My soul left body and went up to the judgment place of God.... I have seen a great light in my soul from that good land; I have understand all Christ wants us to do. Before I came alive I saw I was sinner. Angel in heaven said to me, 'You must go back and turn alive again on earth.' When I came back I told my friends, 'There is a God—there is a Christian people. My good friends, be Christians.' When I came alive, I

<sup>34</sup> Recorded by Mooney, *op. cit.*

tell my friends, 'Good thing in heaven. God is kind to us. If you will try hard and help me we will be better men on earth.' And now we all feel that it is so." The ideas here are derived from the teachings of the whites, but the mystical experience which gives them their force and vividness belongs to no particular race,—or, if it belong to any one more than to another, it is surely the Indian whose claim to it is best.

16. In conclusion a word must be said regarding the reflective aspect of the Indian's thought, his philosophy, and the devotional spirit responding to it. There is, of course, among the Indians a gradation of conception as great as their gradation in culture, which ranges from the utter savagery of the naked cannibals of Brazil to the grave and refined decorum of men like the Aymara and Maya; but it may be questioned whether the intellectual advancement of the Indian at his best is not greater than that accompanying a like stage of material knowledge elsewhere in the world. The American continents appear not to have furnished the natural facilities for material conquests to be found in Mediterranean and some Asiatic regions; there were not equally natural alloys of metal, for example, and no animals comparable to the horse and ox capable of domestication.

Certainly the mental attainment of the Indian, at its culmen, may be fairly compared with early Greek and Hindu thought. While Indian speculation had nowhere passed beyond the stage of mythologizing thought, it had, in its mythologies, frequently attained a henotheistic and approached a monotheistic or even pantheistic conception of the divine nature. The attainment of such conceptions is, in fact, almost implicit in the evolution of speech. We have spoken of the peculiar sanctity which attaches to a name in primitive thought and of its irresistible tendency to hypostatization. This is curiously illustrated by the Indian notion of an archetypal chief (a veritable Platonic Idea) of every animal species, from which each individual of the species draws its life. The myth of such universals—*universalia ante res* in the true scholastic sense—is a plain consequence of the primitive inability to think an abstraction other than concretely; every idea corresponds to a reality because every idea is a present vision of its object. And with man's growing consciousness of his superiority over the rest of the animal kingdom, it is inevitable that the archetype of his own species, the anthropomorphic god, should assume the leadership of the whole pantheon of animal deities.

Eventually, too, the Indian conception of the natural world as made up of congeries of active, volitional powers, of *makers* and

*doers*, must result in the notion of a supreme Maker, Controller of all lesser destinies. The Supreme Being will, to be sure, be concretely represented—that is always a necessity of primitive thinking; but the dominant idea is sure to be betrayed in his names and attributes. The Mexican Tezcatlipoca was represented under the form of a young man, but he was regarded as “invisible and impalpable,” penetrating all places in heaven, in earth, and in hell. The very names of certain Peruvian deities prove their abstractness: Pachaychacher, “he who instructs the world”; Chinchacamac, “creator and protector of the Chinchas”; Pachacamac, “he who animates the world,” “soul of the universe.” Possibly some of these names were originally cult epithets, but this does not detract from the fact that they came to be considered the proper description of the deity. Pachacamac was originally the god of the Yuncas, by whom he was worshiped under the form of an idol. It is an interesting commentary on the mental pre-eminence of the Incas that when they had conquered the Yuncas they assimilated Pachacamac to their own sun-worship. The sun was worshiped by the Incas as their ancestor, and if not as a purely monotheistic god, at least as one infinitely superior to all others. But the god of the civilized Yuncas was not to be disregarded, and from the recorded remarks of some of the Inca emperors it is plain that sun-worship, essential as it was from a political point of view, was not wholly satisfying to Inca intelligence. Hence it was that they adopted the belief in Pachacamac, regarding him as the sustainer of life; but they decreed that, because he was invisible, there should be no temples built to him and no sacrifices offered; they were to content themselves with adoring him, says Garcilasso,<sup>35</sup> “in their souls, with great veneration, as sufficiently appears from the external demonstrations which they made with the head, the eyes, the arms, with the whole attitude of body, whenever his name was mentioned.”

In North America the more enlightened tribes seem all to have recognized a “Great Spirit” or “Master of Life”—a supreme power to whom was due an especial devotion, as the ultimate giver of all good. And it is curious to note how this belief constantly tends to elevate the supreme deity to a sphere remote from human interest; he becomes an impassive spectator of the world he has created, to whom it is useless to address prayers and sacrifices save through mediators.

Thus, the Ojibwas place at the head of their pantheon a Great Spirit, or Manitou, whose name is mentioned only with reverence,

<sup>35</sup> *Op. cit.*, VI, xxx.



but who plays no great part in worship. Beneath him is the Good Manitou from whom men receive the mysteries and between whom and men Manabozho, the "Great Rabbit," acts as mediator. A similar belief in a supreme god and demiurgic beings appears among the Pawnees. "All the powers that are in the heavens and all those that are upon the earth are derived from the mighty Tirawa atius. He is the father of all things visible and invisible." But "at the creation of the world it was arranged that there should be lesser powers. Tirawa atius, the mighty power, could not come near to man, could not be seen or felt by him, therefore the lesser powers were permitted. They were to mediate between man and Tirawa." The following verses translated by Miss Fletcher from a Pawnee ritual show how nearly this conception approaches the monotheistic ideal:<sup>86</sup>

"Each god in his place  
Speaks out his thought, grants or rejects  
Man's suppliant cry, asking for help;  
But none can act until the Council grand  
Comes to accord, thinks as one mind,  
Has but one will, all must obey.  
Hearken! the Council gave consent—  
Hearken! and Tirawa, mightier than all."

The name of the Supreme Being is never uttered by the Indian save with devout reverence. Indeed, one missionary, in commenting upon the lack of oaths in Indian tongues, states that the Indians are not merely shocked but terribly frightened at the white man's swearing. This points in the direction of name-magic, but that name-magic can be no full account of the Indian's attitude, that this attitude is indeed one of intense and earnest reverence, the barest acquaintance with Indian psychology makes sure.

But the Indian is not entirely free from that skepticism which advance in reflective thinking must always entail. It is recorded of the Inca Tupac Yupanqui that he questioned the divinity of the sun on the ground that in following always the same course through the heavens it was acting the part of a slave rather than of a free and regnant being. And there are certain utterances of the Aztecs, such as that in which Tezcatlipoca is addressed: "We men, we are but a pageant before you, a spectacle for your sport and diversion,"—which imply an unlooked-for maturity of reflection and give promise of philosophic development which we can scarce but regret the history of the world should not have made possible.

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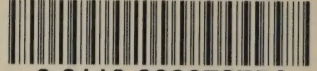




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